

**Minutes of the Meeting of the New Jersey State Board of Education
In the Conference Room on the First Floor
100 River View Executive Plaza
Trenton, NJ
February 4, 2026**

Presiding: Kathy Goldenberg, President

Secretary: Kevin Dehmer, Commissioner

Present Constituting a Quorum

Dr. Nedd Johnson
Dr. Ronald Butcher
Mr. Arcelio Aponte
Ms. Mary Beth Berry
Mr. Jack Fornaro
Dr. Joseph Ricca
Ms. Mary Bennett
Ms. Jeanette Peña
Dr. Claudine Keenan
Mr. Ahmed Shehata
Mr. James Williams

Absent

Convening

State Board of Education President Kathy Goldenberg convened the public meeting at 9:09 a.m. with the reading of the statement pertaining to the public session of the State Board meeting as it complies with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.

The Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the State Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted in the Department of Education (Department), Secretary of State's Office and notice also having been given to the State House Press Corps, the Governor's Office and the State Board agenda subscribers.

And seeing there was a quorum, the meeting of February 4, 2026, was called to order.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Goldenberg then read the resolution pertaining to the executive session of the State Board meeting as it complies with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Whereas, in order to protect the personal privacy and to avoid situations wherein the public interest might be disserved, the Open Public Meetings Act permits public bodies to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which certain matters are discussed, now therefore be it

Resolved, that consistent with the provision of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12.b, the State Board Education will now adjourn to executive session to discuss personnel and legal issues. The State Board immediately adjourned to executive session on February 4, 2026.

Reconvening

President Goldenberg reconvened the open meeting at 10:51 a.m. with the reading of the resolution pertaining to the resumption of the public session of the State Board meeting as it complies with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Whereas, consistent with the provision of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12.b, the State Board will now adjourn from executive session to resume the open session of this meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by State Board member Mary Bennett.

Welcome

President Goldenberg stated the State Board meetings are accessible to the public for viewing on YouTube Channel and would like to advise that YouTube provides readily accessible language translation options for closed captioning. She further stated if you are viewing this simulcast now, you can use the settings option in YouTube for information about sub-titles, auto translations and closed captioning in multiple languages.

Approval of Minutes of The Meeting

On a motion duly seconded and carried, the State Board members approved the minutes of the public meeting conducted on January 7, 2026. State Board member Mary Beth Berry abstained.

President's Reports

Public Testimony

President Goldenberg stated that today, beginning at 1:00 pm, the State Board will receive testimony from registered members of the public on the draft revisions to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in five content areas. She stated this marks the third and final regional hearing on the draft revisions.

Permanent Student Representative

President Goldenberg stated that this year's student representative to the board is Kailynn DuRose, a junior at East Brunswick High School in Middlesex County, and that her advisor is Bonnie Benkard. She stated that Kailynn will not be with us today due to school commitments, and that she will return next month.

State Board Committee Reports

There were no committee meeting reports.

Resolution in Recognition of Career and Technical Education Month in New Jersey

President Goldenberg requested that the State Board adopt a ceremonial resolution in recognition of Career and Technical Education Month in New Jersey. The State Board unanimously adopted the following resolution read by State Board member Mary Beth Berry recognizing Career and Technical Education Month in New Jersey.

Resolution in Recognition of Career and Technical Education Month in New Jersey

Whereas, the month of February 2026 has been designated nationally as Career and Technical Education Month[®] by the Association for Career and Technical Education; and

Whereas, teachers, administrators, and school counselors involved in career and technical education help more than 137,800 secondary and postsecondary students in New Jersey pursue a range of career pathways; and

Whereas, career and technical education programs incorporate a rigorous academic core coupled with a high-level technical curriculum to deliver opportunities for students to earn college credit, industry-valued credentials, and work-based learning to be college and career-ready; and

Whereas, career and technical education prepares New Jerseyans for the jobs that exist today and equips them with the skills employers will need in the future; and

Whereas, the New Jersey Department of Education has continued to implement a variety of career and technical education initiatives, including the Artificial Intelligence Technology in Career and Technical Education Pathways, Building Capacity for Career Pathways, Elevate Career and Technical Innovation, Esports Industry Career Exploration, Elevating High-quality Work-based Learning and Expanding Career Pathways in Artificial Intelligence programs; and

Whereas, career and technical education offers opportunities for student leadership experiences supporting personal and professional growth through seven State career and technical student organizations currently serving approximately 51,900 middle school, high school and college students in New Jersey through membership in Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA); National FFA (formerly known as Future Farmers of America) Organization; Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA); DECA, an Association of Marketing Students; HOSA – Future Health Professionals; Technology Student Association (TSA); and SkillsUSA; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the New Jersey State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education hereby recognize February 2026 as Career and Technical Education Month in New Jersey and the potential of career and technical education to fully prepare students for postsecondary success.

Commissioner's Reports

Commissioner Dehmer stated there are no Commissioner's reports this month.

Items for Consideration

**Items scheduled for a vote are marked with an asterisk.*

***A. Appointments**

- Approved the following appointment pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:4-32-35 and N.J.A.C. 6A:2-1.1 et seq.:
 - Dr. Lily Laux, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Educational Services
 - Dr. Joseph Howe, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Finance and Business Services
 - Mr. Christopher Williams, Chief of Staff

Commissioner Dehmer stated that Dr. Lily Laux would begin to serve as Acting Commissioner of Education effective at the end of the day.

***B. Certification of School Districts**

- There were no districts for certification.

Work Session

There was no work session.

New Business

President Goldenberg stated that today is bittersweet for the members of the State Board and Department, as Commissioner Dehmer will conclude his tenure as Commissioner bringing to close a hallmark career at the Department of Education. She stated the State Board thanks him for his service and presented a resolution to Commissioner Dehmer.

Resolution in Honor of Commissioner Kevin J. Dehmer

Whereas, Mr. Kevin J. Dehmer has served with integrity and distinction as Commissioner of Education, including service as Acting Commissioner and Interim Commissioner on multiple occasions, and is being honored for his exemplary leadership of the New Jersey Department of Education; and

Whereas, Commissioner Dehmer began his career at the New Jersey Department of Education as an intern and, over the course of nearly two decades of public service, rose through the ranks to become Commissioner, reflecting a deep institutional knowledge of the Department of Education and a lifelong commitment to public education; and

Whereas, throughout his career at the Department of Education, Commissioner Dehmer held numerous senior leadership roles, including Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Finance and Business Services and Chief Financial Officer, where he oversaw the administration of State education funding representing approximately one-third of the State's annual budget, as well as more than one billion dollars in federal education funds; and

Whereas, Commissioner Dehmer played a central role in supporting efforts to fully fund New Jersey’s school funding formula under the School Funding Reform Act for the first time in State history; and

Whereas, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Commissioner Dehmer provided steady leadership to New Jersey’s public education system, guiding the safe reopening of schools, supporting students and educators during unprecedented disruption, and helping administer more than four billion dollars in federal COVID-19 relief funding to New Jersey school districts; and

Whereas, Commissioner Dehmer was the architect of the State’s efforts to close the digital divide during the pandemic, leading the development and implementation of initiatives that expanded access to devices and connectivity for students and educators statewide, thereby ensuring continuity of instruction and long-term improvements in digital access; and

Whereas, during his tenure, Commissioner Dehmer advanced landmark education initiatives, including the expansion of high-quality State-funded preschool, as well as efforts to strengthen early literacy instruction, support student mental health, and promote academic recovery and resilience in the post-pandemic era; and

Whereas, Commissioner Dehmer’s leadership has been marked by a commitment to fiscal responsibility, collaboration with educators and stakeholders, and an unwavering focus on improving outcomes for New Jersey’s students; and

Whereas, after almost twenty years dedicated to the betterment of public education in New Jersey, Mr. Kevin J. Dehmer is concluding his service as Commissioner of Education; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the New Jersey State Board of Education hereby expresses its sincere gratitude to Mr. Kevin J. Dehmer for his years of dedicated service to the students, educators, and families of New Jersey, and for his leadership as Commissioner of Education; and be it further

Resolved, that the New Jersey State Board of Education honors Mr. Kevin J. Dehmer for his distinguished record of public service and extends its best wishes for continued success and fulfillment in his future endeavors.

Vice President Nedd Johnson stated that February is Black History Month, and he had the pleasure to attend the regional New Jersey Amistad Commission’s African American History Day Contest at Pleasantville High School on January 31, 2026. He stated he commends all the Camden parents, students from Pleasantville, administrators and teachers that came out on a Saturday to attend. He further stated it was designed for elementary students in grades 4-5 and the goal of the event was to highlight New Jersey’s African American history and the contributions that have been made to both the United States and to world history. Vice President Johnson stated the contest was an opportunity for students to successfully develop research, writing, public speaking and critical thinking skills as well as pride in being a citizen of the state of New Jersey. He stated the Northern New Jersey event will be held on Saturday, February 14, 2026, at William Paterson University. He further stated additionally, the collective commissions will be celebrating a Women’s History Month event called “Let’s Celebrate Women’s Achievements as Trailblazers” on Saturday, March 14 at the Kathleen Ludwig Center at Rutgers University.

Adjournment

On a motion duly seconded and carried, the State Board of Education adjourned its February 4, 2026, public meeting at 11:39 a.m.

Dr. Lily Laux, Commissioner
Secretary, N.J. State Board of Education